

order to build up steam pressure and disinfect contaminated material. The basis for this amendment can be found at original claim 21, as well as the last paragraph of page 4 and the paragraph on page 8 of the application. Accordingly, no new matter has been included.

Applicant's previous submission of drawings was objected to because the slide runners 24 were not shown to properly support the screw conveyor. In addition, the drawings were objected to for not showing a plurality of treating apparatuses being arranged in parallel. Accordingly, in response to these objections, Applicant has submitted additional corrections by way of separate paper enclosed herewith. Appropriate amendments to the specification have also been made in accordance with the drawing changes, without introducing new matter. It is, therefore, requested that these objections be removed.

Claims 23-24, 26-28, 31-33, 35-36, 40-43 and 45-46 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,270,000 (Goldner et al.) In addition, claim 47 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Goldner et al. These rejections are respectfully traversed.

Applicant's invention is directed to a method for the treatment of contaminated material, and to an apparatus for treating contaminated material. In both the method and apparatus, contaminated material is fed into a conveyor or system comprising two treatment zones. The claimed invention provides method steps and apparatus elements, which provide for feeding the contaminated material through an input unit to a first treatment zone where the contaminated material is moistened in a liquid reservoir. The contaminated

material is then conveyed to a second treatment zone, and ultimately discharged through a discharge element. According to the invention, the input unit and discharge element are capable of being closed off during operation. This provides the advantage that sufficient steam pressure is generated so that the contaminated material is disinfected or sterilized.

Goldner discloses an apparatus and method for disinfecting contaminated materials. The apparatus includes loading, treatment, and unloading sections. As shown in Fig. 1 of Goldner, contaminated material is introduced to the device through a loading chamber 3. The contaminated material is then passed through a refuse comminutor, and into a lower level of a microwave chamber 16. It is clear from Fig. 1 that the microwave chamber 16 is open to the atmosphere. Thus, the Goldner system is an open system, not a closed off system like that claimed by Applicant. Moreover, Goldner does not disclose or suggest providing any means that would be capable of closing off the input region to the microwave chamber, or the discharge region of the conveying device. It follows, therefore, that Goldner does not disclose or suggest a method or apparatus as claimed by Applicant. Accordingly, it is requested that the rejection of claims over Goldner be withdrawn.

Claim 44 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Goldner in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,368,555 (Goeldner). In response to this rejection, Applicant submits herewith a Declaration under 37 C.F.R. § 1.132, indicating that the Goeldner patent is not the work of another. Accordingly, the Goeldner patent is not prior art to this application. Applicant, therefore, requests that this rejection be withdrawn.

Claims 29-30 and 37-39 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Goldner in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,425,925 (Kline). In making the rejection, the Examiner indicated that Goldner does not disclose a mechanism to control excess water build up. The Kline reference was considered by the Examiner to disclose the regulation of a liquid reservoir level by the use of a weir and overflow arrangement. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

The Kline reference suffers from the same deficiency as the Goldner reference. Namely, Kline fails to disclose any method or means whereby an input unit and a discharge element of a contaminated material treatment system can be closed off. Like Goldner, Kline is not capable of generating steam at a sufficient level to properly disinfect the contaminated material. Accordingly, the combination of Goldner and Kline fail to suggest Applicant's claimed invention. Withdrawal of the rejection of Goldner in view of Kline is, therefore, respectfully requested.

Having demonstrated that Applicant's claimed invention is not disclosed or suggested by the cited references, withdrawal of the rejections in this application is requested. Early and favorable reconsideration is, therefore, earnestly solicited .

If there are any questions regarding this amendment or the application in general, a telephone call to the undersigned would be appreciated since this should expedite the prosecution of the application for all concerned.


If necessary to effect a timely response, this paper should be considered as a petition for an Extension of Time sufficient to effect a timely response, and

please charge any deficiency in fees or credit any overpayments to Deposit

Account No. 05-1323 (Docket #1997/49442).

Respectfully submitted,

February 4, 2003



J. D. Evans
Registration No. 26,269
Richard D. Jordan
Registration No. 33,519

CROWELL & MORING, LLP
P.O. Box 14300
Washington, DC 20044-4300
Telephone No.: (202) 624-2500
Facsimile No.: (202) 628-8844
JDE/RDJ:lcb
CAM#: 37303.001



VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

The paragraph beginning at page 6, line 15, has been amended as follows:

In the following, the device according to the invention will be described in more detail with the aid of an exemplary embodiment, whereby reference will be made to the ~~single~~ figures.

Fig. 1 ~~The figure~~ schematically shows a device according to the invention.

Fig. 2 is a schematic of a parallel arrangement of the invention.

The paragraph beginning at page 6, line 18, has been amended as follows:

~~In the figure~~ Fig. 1, a device for the treatment of contaminated materials, particularly infected materials, is indicated with 1. The device 1 has a feed hopper 2, under which a shredder 3 is positioned, as a component of an input unit. From the shredder 3, a gravity feed hopper 4 leads to an intake 5 of a tube-shaped treatment chamber 6. The intake 5 can be closed by a slide valve 7. In place of the slide valve 7, or in addition to same, a lock could also be provided. A metering device 8 is position above the intake 5.

The paragraph bridging pages 6 and 7 of the application has been amended as follows:

A screw conveyor 9 having a conveyor spiral 10 extends into the treatment chamber 6. The screw conveyor 9 is driven by a drive 11 has a bearing 25 at one end, and rests on slide runners 24. The treatment chamber 6 is slanted upwards

in the transport direction of the screw conveyor 9, with, for example, an angle to the horizontal of approximately 10° to 40°. The screw conveyor 9 can rest on slide runners 24. A bearing 25 is provided at only one end of screw conveyor 9. At the upper end of the treatment chamber 6 there is a discharge element 12 with a discharge chute 13. The discharge element 12 is also provided with a slide valve 14. A lock could, of course, also be provided here instead of the slide valve 14 or in addition to same.

Before the last paragraph of page 9, the following paragraph has been inserted:

Fig. 2 shows an installation having several devices. The installation includes a shredder unit 3, whereby the devices 1 are positioned in parallel so that they can be supplied simultaneously and/or sequentially by the shredder unit 3.

IN THE CLAIMS:

Claims 23 and 33 have been amended as follows:

23. (Amended) A method for the treatment of contaminated material comprising feeding said contaminated material via an input unit to a conveyor system extending through a treatment chamber which slants upward in the conveyor transport direction and which comprises first treatment zone adjacent the lower end of the treatment chamber and second treatment zone extending from the first treatment zone to the upper end of the treatment chamber, heating and treating the contaminated materials in said treatment chamber,

and discharging the treated materials via a discharge element, wherein said contaminated material is moistened in a liquid reservoir in said first treatment zone by liquid present in the contaminated material or water added from outside the treatment chamber, the liquid in said liquid reservoir being to a temperature lower than the boiling point of water, and thereafter heating the contaminated material in said second treatment zone at least partially to a temperature above the boiling point of water wherein the input unit and discharge element are closed off in order to build up steam pressure to disinfect the contaminated material.

33. (Amended) An apparatus for treating contaminated material, said apparatus comprising a treatment chamber which slants upward from a lower inlet end to an upper discharge end and which comprises first heating zone adjacent the lower end of the treatment chamber and a second heating zone extending from the first treatment zone to the upper end of the treatment chamber, an input unit and said inlet end for introducing contaminated material to be treated into the treatment chamber, a discharge element at said discharge end for discharging treated material from said treatment chamber, a conveyor system for conveying material to be treated through said treatment chamber, means for moistening contaminated material in said first heating zone, means for heating liquid in said first heating zone to a temperature below the boiling point of water, and means for heating moistened contaminated material in said second heating zone at least partially to a temperature above the boiling point of water and close off the input unit and the discharge element to generate steam pressure to disinfect the contaminated material.